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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN IMMEDIATE 0784
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE 6724
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE IMMEDIATE 1054
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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SUBJECT: GERMANS PUSH NATO DEBATE ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Classified By: Ambassador Ivo H. Daalder for Reasons 1.4(b) & (d)

¶1. (S) Summary: In his first meetings with two NATO counterparts and NATO Secretary General Rasmussen, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle is pushing his government's new policy to seek the withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from German soil. In discussions with Dutch FM Verhagen, Belgian FM Leterme, and SYG Rasmussen, Westerwelle explained the decision taken by the new German government in its coalition agreement. After our conversations with Allies, the SYG, and contacts, USNATO understands that, in each of these meetings, the FM has stressed that Berlin will act based on consensus within NATO -- and not unilaterally-- to move the Alliance closer to President Obama's Prague vision of a world without nuclear weapons. End Summary.

¶2. (S) On November 2, Dutch FM Verhagen and German FM Westerwelle met in the Hague in Westerwelle's first foreign travel as the new German FM. During the meeting, FM Verhagen explained to Westerwelle that he has had a long-term interest in nuclear weapons basing in Europe and was eager to pursue the goal of a "nuclear weapons free world." Westerwelle described the coalition agreement of his newly formed government and its call for consultations with NATO Allies on the removal of nuclear weapons from Germany. FM Verhagen emphasized with Westerwelle that Germany should take "no unilateral steps" on the issue, but should urge the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from German soil only within the context of NATO.

¶3. (S) On November 3, in a meeting with NATO SYG Rasmussen, Westerwelle told the SYG that a "nuclear-free Germany was a good vision," but he added that Germany would pursue that vision within NATO. Rasmussen stressed the importance of addressing the issue among the 28 NATO Allies after full consultations and noted, at the request of USNATO, that the United States wished to address the issue in a NATO context only.

¶4. (S) Also on November 3, German FM Westerwelle plans to meet Belgian FM Leterme. U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Howard Gutman spoke at length with Leterme's chief of staff, Frans Van Daele, who most recently served as Belgium's Permanent Representative to NATO, to discuss FM Leterme's position on forward-basing of nuclear weapons. Van Daele told Ambassador Gutman that Belgium only wished to discuss nuclear weapons basing within NATO as a whole and in the larger context of the drafting of the Strategic Concept.

¶5. (S) Comment: Despite some suggestions to the contrary in media reporting, Germany is not/not pursuing bilateral or

trilateral talks with Belgium and the Netherlands to achieve a joint position on the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe. What the new FM's first diplomatic forays underscore is that the new German government is committed to achieve the withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Germany. The German Deputy Permanent Representative to NATO, Dirk Brengelmann (protect), told USNATO that this decision "will not go away."

The recent coalition agreement comes from a central-right government with a Minister of Defense from the conservative CSU party-- a part of Germany's government that has always been a staunch supporter of nuclear weapons basing in Germany. However, Germany also is intent on pursuing the goal in the multilateral context of NATO during what, no doubt, will be lengthy consultations with NATO's 28 Allies in the months and years to come. End Comment.

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